

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1, 5, 11-13, 19, 21-22, 24-27, 30, 34-40 are pending in the application, with claims 1, 13, and 27 being the independent claims.

Claims 15, 16, and 30 are sought to be cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein.

New claims 35-40 are sought to be added.

These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested. Support for the changes to the amended claims can be found, for example, at paragraphs [0055-0062] of the specification and FIGS. 4 and 5 of the drawings. Support for the new claims can be found, for example, at paragraphs [0097-0107] of the specification and FIG. 10 of the drawings.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Applicants acknowledge and appreciate the Examiner's indication that he has withdrawn his rejection of claims 1, 5, 11, 12, 21, 22, and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, in light of Applicants' remarks set forth in the Reply filed on March 20, 2007.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 5, 13, 19, 27, 33, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,734,879 to Hasha et al. ("Hasha"). For the reasons set forth below, Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection.

Applicants' invention is directed to a graphic user interface (GUI) for simplifying the control of multiple consumer electronic devices. The user is first presented with a room control screen from which a user can select among a number of general control options (e.g., video, audio, lighting, or environment) (see Fig. 3). In response to the user's selection, Applicants' GUI displays a screen containing a first set of objects for controlling a device consistent with the user's selection (see Fig. 3). For example, if the user desired control of "video," he or she would be presented with a screen populated with control options for controlling a television.

Displayed concurrently on the screen with the control options is a second set of control objects representing a number of affiliated devices that are capable of providing input to the selected device that have been configured for viewing on the user interface (such as a DVD player or DVR connected to the television). Selection of one of the affiliated devices by the user from this second set of control objects results in the user being presented with a new screen populated with control options for controlling the selected affiliated device. Importantly, this new screen retains and concurrently displays the second set of objects so that the user can continue to see and select other affiliated devices without having to jump back to the previous screen.

In particular, independent claim 1 of the Application is directed to a GUI for managing a plurality of system components within a controlled environment, comprising:

- a first set of control objects for selecting a system component within the controlled environment, wherein activation of a control object from said first set denotes said selected system component and populates the user interface with control options, wherein each control option is associated with a sequence of commands that, when executed, sends instructions to control the operations or functions of said selected system component; and

- a second set of control objects displayed concurrently with said control options associated with said selected system component, wherein each control object within said second set of control objects is configurable for viewing on the user interface and represents an affiliate system component capable of providing an input to said selected system component, wherein activation of a control object from said second set populates the user interface with control options for an affiliate system component associated with the activated control object from the second set, wherein each control option for said affiliate system component is associated with a sequence of commands that, when executed, sends instructions to control the operations or functions of said affiliate system component and wherein said control options for said affiliate system component are displayed concurrently with said second set of control objects on the user interface.

Independent claim 13 of the Application is directed to a method of managing a plurality of system components within a controlled environment, comprising:

- presenting, on a user interface, a first set of control objects, each object being associated with one or more system components within the controlled environment;

- selecting a system component in response to receiving an activation signal associated with a control object from said first set;

- populating said user interface with control options for the selected system component;

- associating each control option with a sequence of executable commands that sends instructions to control the operations or functions of the selected system component;

- presenting, on said user interface concurrently with said

control options associated with said selected system component, a second set of control objects, wherein each control object within said second set of control objects represents an affiliate system component capable of providing an input to the selected system component and has been configured for viewing on said user interface;

presenting, on said user interface concurrently with said second set of control objects, control options for an affiliate system component in response to activating a control object from said second set; and

associating each control option for said affiliate system component with a sequence of executable commands that sends instructions to control the operations or functions of said affiliate system component.

Independent Claim 27 is directed to a computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having computer readable program code means embedded in said medium for causing a computer to manage a plurality of system components within a controlled environment, comprising:

first computer readable program code means for presenting, on a user interface, a first set of control objects, each object being associated with one or more system components within the controlled environment;

second computer readable program code means for selecting a system component in response to receiving an activation signal associated with a control object from said first set;

third computer readable program code means for populating said user interface with control options for the selected system component;

fourth computer readable program code means for associating each control option with a sequence of executable commands that sends instructions to control the operations or functions of the selected system component;

fifth computer readable program code means for presenting, on said user interface concurrently with said control options associated with the selected system component, a second set of control objects, wherein each control object within said second set of control objects is configurable for viewing on said user interface and represents an affiliate system component capable of providing an input to the selected system component;

sixth computer readable program code means for presenting, on said user interface concurrently with said second set of control objects, control options for an affiliate system component in response to activating a control object from said second set; and

seventh computer readable program code means for associating each control option for said affiliate system component with a sequence of executable commands that sends instructions to control the operations or functions of said affiliate system component.

Hasha Fails to Disclose Displaying Control Options for An Affiliate System Component Concurrently With the Second Set of Control Objects

Hasha does not anticipate Applicants' claimed invention. Among other things, Hasha does not teach or suggest the GUI of independent claim 1 "wherein control options for said affiliate system component are displayed concurrently with said second set of control objects on the user interface," or the method of independent claim 13, which requires "presenting, on said user interface concurrently with said second set of control objects, control options for an affiliate system component in response to activating a control object from said second set," or the computer program product of independent claim 27 having "sixth computer readable program code means for presenting, on said user interface concurrently with said second set of control objects, control options for an affiliate system component in response to activating a control object from said second set."

Indeed, the GUI according to Hasha displays general functions (e.g. watch movies, watch tv channels, listen to music albums, listen to radio stations, etc.) that are available for selection by the user. In response to the user's selection, the GUI in Hasha then displays on a new GUI screen a content list that correspond to the selected function (e.g., individual songs on a selected album). Importantly, however, Hasha does not

concurrently display on this new GUI screen other functions that are available for selection by the user should the user decide to make a change from the current function. For example, after having selected “Movies” from the “Program Selectors” list in the GUI depicted in Hasha Fig. 2, the user in Hasha is then presented with a new GUI screen with a play list of available movies (see Hasha Fig. 3). This new GUI screen, however, no longer displays the Program Selectors list. As a result, the user must press the “Back” button to return to the GUI of Hasha Fig. 2 to review and select another choice from the Program Selectors list. In other words, once the user in Hasha makes a functionality selection and advances to the next control screen, he or she must navigate out of that screen and return to one or more higher-level screens elsewhere in the menu path to determine what other device-driven functionality is available and to control such other devices. This is because once the affiliated device has been selected by the user, the GUI disclosed in Hasha simply does not display control options for controlling the selected affiliated device concurrently with the second set of control objects on the same screen.

Consequently, in order for a user in Hasha to determine what other devices are connected to the selected device and to activate such affiliated devices, the user would have to physically exit out of the control GUI for the device currently in operation and navigate to another GUI that displays such other devices. Such “screen flipping” is one of the deficiencies in traditional control schemes that Applicants’ intended to obviate through the present invention. This is a shortcoming common in traditional GUI schemes for controlling consumer electronic devices, which Applicants have overcome with their claimed invention.

In view of the above, Hasha does not teach or suggest every limitation comprising independent claims 1, 13, and 27. Accordingly, Hasha does not render those claims unpatentable under Section 102(e).

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 5, 11-13, 19, 21, 22, 24-27, 33, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0103088 to Dresti et al. ("Dresti") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,198,479 to Humpleman et al. ("Humpleman"). For the reasons set forth below, Applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's rejection.

Dresti and Humpleman Fails to Disclose Configurable Control Objects of the Second Set for Viewing on the User Interface

Even assuming for present purposes the propriety of combining Dresti and Humpleman in the manner proposed by the Examiner, that combination fails to teach or suggest the Applicants' invention. Among other things, that combination fails to teach or suggest that the control objects appearing in the second set of control objects displayed on the user interface representing affiliate system components are "configurable for viewing on [the/said] user interface," as recited in independent claims 1 and 27 or "configured for viewing on said user interface," as recited in independent claim 13.

According to Applicants' invention, a user can configure which control objects in the second set of control objects representing affiliate system components can be viewed on the user interface. The user may, for instance, wish to hide certain intermediary affiliate system components that are included in the chain of components responsive to a

user's section, but which are not necessary for viewing or control by the user during ordinary use. For example, an amplifier can be linked to a television and a DVD player under a typical set-up scheme. If the user selects the control object representing the DVD player, the amplifier would automatically be activated and controlled to deliver the selected DVD functionality in accordance with Applicants' invention. (See Paragraphs [0097], [0102-0107]). However, it would not be necessary to show the amplifier as a control object on the user interface because direct control of the amplifier is not necessary. Thus, the user can configure the GUI such that the control object representing the amplifier does not appear on the second set of control objects.

On the other hand, the Dresti-Humpleman combination does not teach or suggest that the user can choose which affiliate system components can be seen on the user interface. To the contrary, the Dresti-Humpleman combination teaches away from Applicants' invention. Not only does that combination fail to teach or suggest the ability to select whether a control object representing certain affiliate system component is hidden from view on the user interface, Humpleman actually teaches that buttons for all devices available for control are to be displayed, including those that have nothing to do with the device selected by the user. [See Humpleman at Col. 15, lines 9-12]. For example, if the user selects the device button corresponding to "Dad's TV," the GUI in Humpleman will also display buttons for other televisions on the system (although the other TV buttons are "deactivated," they nevertheless remain viewable on the GUI) [See Humpleman at Col. 15, lines 57-64]. Thus, the user in Humpleman has no control over which control objects representing affiliate system components are displayed for viewing.

Similarly, neither is the ability to configure control objects representing affiliate system components for viewing on the user interface taught or suggested by Dresti. The use of macro buttons to represent certain device-driven activities without displaying any icons representing the underlying devices teaches away from Applicants' invention. Indeed, as the Examiner notes, when a macro is created, "the selected devices within the macro [are] not displayed" and "[o]nly the icon representing the activity would be shown." Like Humpleman, this all-or-nothing approach does not give the user the ability to select and show control objects on an object-by-object basis as provided in Applicants' invention.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that the proposed combination of Dresti and Humpleman does not render independent claims 1, 13 and 27 unpatentable under Section 103(a).

Conclusion

Because Hasha does not teach or suggest each and every feature of independent claims 1, 13 and 27, as explained above, these claims cannot be rendered unpatentable for anticipation by Hasha. Similarly, because the Dresti-Humpleman combination proposed by the Examiner does not teach or suggest each and every feature of independent claims 1, 13 and 27, as explained above, these claims cannot be rendered unpatentable for obviousness by that combination.

The claims that depend from independent claims 1, 13, and 27, are likewise not rendered unpatentable by Hasha or the Dresti-Humpleman combination for the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend and further in view of their own respective features.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner's rejection of pending claims 1, 5, 11-13, 19, 21-22, 24-27, 33-40 be reconsidered and withdrawn and allowed to issue.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicant believes that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX P.L.L.C.



Robert Sokohl
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No. 36,013

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1100 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-3934
(202) 371-2600

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